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INSIDE THIS MONTH:

Solar water heating for homes

North Carolina estate auctions

New Year's oyster stew

Planning your financial future—see center pages

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on earning
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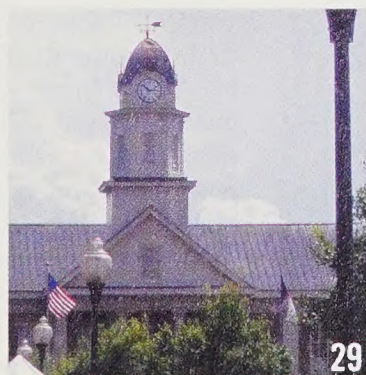
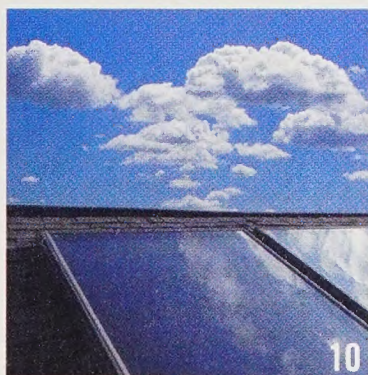


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ON THE COVER

Early winter in western Pitt County. Photography by Doug Van de Zande.



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North Carolina's electric cooperatives provide reliable, safe and affordable electric service to nearly 900,000 homes and businesses. The 26 electric cooperatives are each member-owned, not-for-profit and overseen by a board of directors elected by the membership.

Why Do We Send You Carolina Country Magazine?

Your cooperative sends you Carolina Country as a convenient, economical way to share with its members information about services, director elections, meetings and management decisions. The magazine also carries legal notices that otherwise would be published in other media at greater cost.

Your co-op's board of directors authorizes a subscription to Carolina Country on behalf of the membership at a cost of less than \$4 per year.



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Soy ink is naturally low in VOCs (volatile organic compounds) and its usage can reduce emissions causing air pollution.

Memo to the President

By J. Ronald McElheney



To President-elect Obama:

On behalf of North Carolina's electric cooperatives, we congratulate you on your election victory to be the President of this great country. We hope to have a productive working relationship with your administration and with the 111th Congress.

During the campaign last fall, we studied your proposals for addressing the challenges facing our nation's energy supply system and our environment. As you prepare to set plans in motion on these issues, you and members of Congress will be hearing from us.

As always, our main concern is that consumers be considered equal stakeholders with businesses and policymakers. As not-for-profit cooperatives, our mission is to supply reliable, safe and affordable electricity to our members "at the end of the line." One way or another, they will be paying the bills for whatever new measures are introduced to improve both our energy supply and our environment. Your emphasis on "short-term relief to American families facing pain at the pump" is good, but we hope you extend your attention to what Americans will be facing at their electricity meters as well.


Policies aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions, reducing our dependence on foreign oil, broadening the application of renewable energy resources, and encouraging the use of plug-in electric vehicles—while they are admirable—all will serve to drive up electric bills for households and businesses. Higher electric bills will come at a time when some cooperatives already have had to raise rates to keep up with recently higher costs of doing business—not only in fuel for generating power and running our fleets, but also the cost of wire, poles and building supplies.

Here in North Carolina we are looking at a 40 percent population increase by 2030. We are preparing for what will be a substantial spike in demand for electricity. Even with significant improvement in expected energy efficiency gains, that means we, along with electric cooperatives across the nation, need to build new power plants and upgrade the transmission systems required to move that power. Costs for building new power plants have skyrocketed. Worldwide economic growth has created a bottleneck for even basic construction materials such as steel, cement

and crushed stone. As a result, the average cost of building coal and nuclear power plants in North America is up a full 130 percent from 2000, according to a study by Cambridge Energy Research Associates and the consulting firm IHS, Inc. A coal plant that would have cost \$1 billion to build in 2000 would cost \$2.3 billion to build today.

Here are some ways that a new energy policy can best serve the 900,000 electric cooperative families and businesses in North Carolina, and the 42 million electric co-op members nationally.

- Fast-track plans to build new transmission lines, connecting rural regions where renewable electricity is generated to the population centers where it's needed.
- Spend \$2 billion per year over the next decade for energy-related research and development. Technologies such as carbon capture and storage, which separates carbon dioxide gas from power plant emissions and compresses it for long-term underground storage, could significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- Cut through bureaucratic red tape and accelerate the construction of new nuclear power plants. Nuclear generation, a proven, low-emissions producer of baseload generation, currently accounts for 13 percent of electric co-op capacity, a number that must be more than tripled by 2030 to meet demand while reducing carbon emissions.
- Promote energy-efficiency as a smart way of not only reducing our dependence on foreign energy sources, but also to treat our natural environment respectfully. Between energy efficiency and load management efforts, electric cooperatives reduced demand by 2,200 megawatts in 2006—roughly the equivalent of three large coal-fired power plants—according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration.

We wish you the best of luck as you take office this month, and we look forward to working with you. 

J. Ronald McElheney is CEO of Jones-Onslow Electric Membership Corporation, the Touchstone Energy cooperative serving more than 60,000 member-accounts in Jones, Onslow and parts of Lenoir, Duplin, Pender and Craven counties.

Thanks to Central EMC

Thank you for the \$500 prize I received at the annual meeting of the Central Electric Membership Corporation. I greatly appreciate your generosity. Both my husband and I enjoyed the delicious chicken and fries, and the wonderful homemade ice cream. The music by the country singer was entertaining.

We were very interested in hearing about the corporation's future plans. As an electrician's family (my husband maintained Sanford's waste water plant's huge electric motors and pumps for many years) we are constantly involved with educating ourselves about the electric industry. We personally have viewed the huge generators at Hoover Dam in Boulder, Colo., attended a workshop on photovoltaic panels at MIT in Boston and, more recently, toured the "wind farm" that went online this summer at Elkton, Michigan.

Years ago my grandparents had electricity available from their own "Delco plant" on their farm before the electric cooperative reached their area. That electric co-op still provides electricity to farms and homes in rural Michigan. We appreciate Central EMC providing electricity to the two houses that we own in Harnett County.

Electricity provides the most work for the least money anywhere in America. I could not hire a person to stoke a fire, to cook my food or heat the water to wash my dishes for the pennies of electricity that do the work for me each day. With the flip of a switch I have brilliant light with no need to fill kerosene lamps and clean tall chimney globes. Thomas Edison was a remarkable man to begin the succession of great inventions in the electricity field. I am so happy to live in a time to be able to enjoy all the electric appliances that work for Americans today. Central EMC is an important part of keeping our country's grid flowing with electricity.

All of the \$500 prize has been shared with others. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to provide other Americans some extra happiness.

/irginia Strucinski, Broadway, Central EMC

The South & retirement

I'm from Wisconsin. I get to read your magazine mostly every month. I grew up in rural Adams County up here, and I very much like the neighborliness of your magazine.

I got an e-mail from a friend who quoted some southern humor. One quote that really struck me was one that is really true: "You can say what you want about the South, but I ain't never heard of anyone wanting to retire to the North."

So true. I don't even want to retire here!

Jay Toser, Fall River, Wisc.

Timers & CFLs

We have a number of lights which were on built-in wall switches with programmable timers and could not be used with CFL bulbs, since they function like a "dimmer." I believe this is because there is always some flow of current through these switches, though maybe not 100 percent of the time.

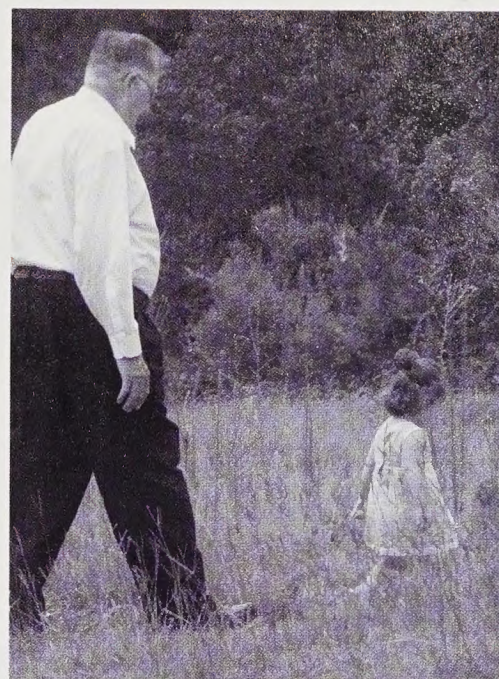
When we contacted the manufacturer, he told us that he had the same type of switch that would, in fact, work with CFL bulbs. It was priced within several dollars of the regular switch.

Marshall Wilcoxon, Hillsborough

Natural places & children

You can't go fishing at many little backwoods creeks anymore. Urban sprawl and "no trespassing" signs have taken care of a lot of that since the time I was growing up in the Wagram area 30 years ago. Oh, how I miss those days. I used to love going down to the train trestle to drown a few crickets. It was so peaceful, with a slight gurgling of the water going under the bridge. The scene was so beautiful, with old dead tree trunks climbing out of the water, homes to countless wildlife. The glimmering of the setting sun blanketed the water's surface. It was heaven on earth for me as a child. Few places can make permanent magic in a child's mind like the serene atmosphere of a place so natural. These places of such tranquility are getting so much harder come by these days. It's really sad.

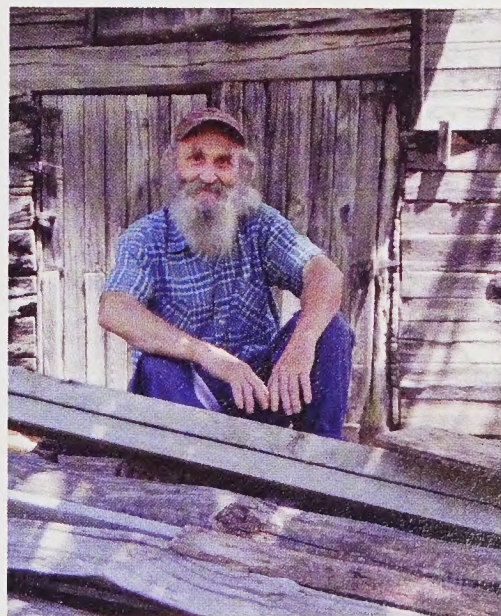
Mike Hales, Seagrove



Going to Pa Gene's hogs

Every Sunday after church we go to my husband's grandfather's house to eat lunch, and every Sunday our little girl Mikayla has to go see her Pa Gene's hogs.

Jamie English, Ellerbe, Pee Dee EMC



Cousin Homer

This is cousin Homer James of Clyde, N.C., in front of his 1800s barn.

Donna Swanger, Dallas, Rutherford EMC

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††Official USDA Food Plans: Cost of Food at Home at Four levels, Liberal Food Plan, US Average, Sept. 2008 (adjusted 4.5% for inflation to reflect 2008 expenditures). Cost of fresh grocery items not included.

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This is a Carolina Country scene in Touchstone Energy territory. If you know where it is, send your answer by January 8 with your name, address, phone number and the name of your electric cooperative.

By e-mail: where@carolinacountry.com

Or by mail: Where in Carolina Country?
P.O. Box 27306
Raleigh, NC 27611

The winner, chosen at random and announced in our February issue, will receive \$25.

December winner

The December picture, by Joel Hornback, showed the Hornback homeplace in Anson County near Polkton, off Hwy. 218 on Bill Curlee Rd., in Pee Dee EMC territory. Joel said his grandparents Ed and Lizzie Preslar Hornback lived there, and he added that it was made of hand-hewn logs with wooden pegs in the 1790s or early 1800s. "The front and back have been torn down to the original," he said, and "plans are to restore it."



December

The correct answers were numbered, and the \$25 winner chosen at random was Jean Wright of Polkton, a member of Pee Dee EMC.

WHERE IN
CAROLINA COUNTRY
IS THIS? →



Nash Community College begins its January lineman training academy



Lineman Certificate in 12 weeks including 400 hours of combined classroom and construction training. Upon completion, the student is qualified for employment as an entry-level line technician. Students completing the certificate have the option of continuing their education leading to a diploma or an associate in applied science degree in electric lineman technology. They can continue their education at NCC through on-line courses, or through cooperative agreements with other community colleges.

NCC offers two Electric Lineman Academies, one beginning in January and one in August. The next academy will begin January 12, 2009. The tuition cost for the entire 12-week program is \$736 for in-state students. Out-of-state students can enroll for \$3796.80. Scholarships and financial aid programs are sometimes available.

To learn more about the program or how to register at Nash Community College, contact Bob Schubauer, NCC's coordinator for electric lineman technology training at bschubauer@nashccc.edu or (252) 451-8427.

As the technological requirements of electric line work become more complex—such as working with the interwoven grid of electrical conductors, switching and monitoring devices, along with protective relaying and metering equipment—training and safety are more important than ever.

Nash Community College offers the only comprehensive lineman training program in North Carolina. NCC's electric lineman technology program

consists of classroom instruction, hands-on line construction training, electrical theory, basic math and communication skills, power generation, transmission and distribution concepts, and climbing poles. The program was developed in conjunction with the North Carolina Association of Electric Cooperatives, which provides training and safety personnel for the program.

The Electric Lineman Academy awards students a Third Class Electric

Try This!

Q: I have seen ads for electric space heaters that claim they will save me money on heating bills? Is this true?

A: Touted electric bill savings from electric base-board heaters, cabinet heaters and even electric fireplaces should be viewed with suspicion because so many factors—home insulation levels, air infiltration and whether a room has an outside wall or window—can make a difference in performance.

Some consumers have been satisfied with a unit's performance when used for zone heating. But anyone who attempts to heat an entire home with electric portables will not be happy when the power bill arrives. Running four 1,000-watt heaters 24 hours will add considerably to your electric bill.

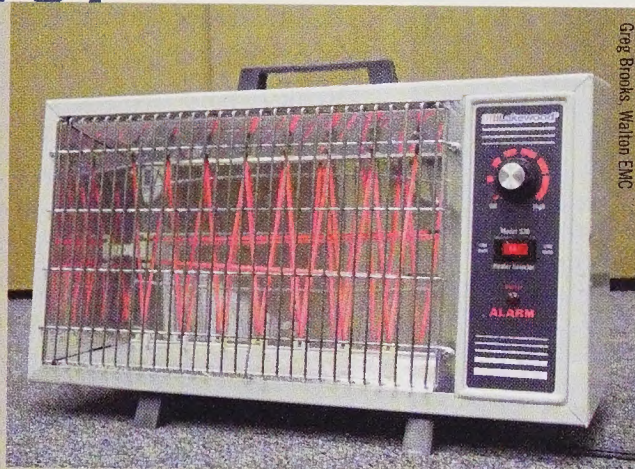
Zone heating is what portable electric heaters were designed for. Energy savings are possible if portables are used correctly. For example, if you lower the central heating system's thermostat and use a portable heater to keep a single occupied room comfortable, you might achieve some savings. Floor plans, insulation and running time are among the factors that will determine if you save or spend more.

Electric space heaters avoid indoor air quality concerns since none require venting, as with combustion-type (kerosene or oil) portable heaters, but they still carry hazards of potential burns and fires and should be used with caution. When buying and installing an electric space heater, you should follow these general safety guidelines:

- Always purchase products that are certified by Underwriters Lab (UL).
- Buy a unit with a tip-over safety switch, which automatically shuts off the heater if the unit is tipped over.
- Electric heaters should be plugged directly into the wall outlet. Avoid using an extension cord.
- Don't operate more than one electric heater on the same household circuit. This might result in dangerous overheating of wiring.

Read up on electric space heaters before investing and know what type is best for your need. Online sources of information include the U.S. Department of Energy's Web site www.eere.energy.gov. Click on "A Consumer's Guide to Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy" to find material on portable heaters.

Source: Buckeye Power, Inc. and Ohio Rural Electric Cooperatives, Inc.



French Broad EMC helps students and communities understand wind energy

French Broad EMC, an electric cooperative serving four western North Carolina counties and two in Tennessee, is a partner in the first rural wind power education program east of the Mississippi River.

The project will install small wind turbines at three schools in Madison County and develop a K-12 alternative-energy curriculum as part of an effort to introduce wind power to rural communities and initiate community discussions around the benefits and challenges of alternative energy resources. A fourth installation will be established at the Madison County Cooperative Extension Office.

The partnership includes the Appalachian Regional Commission, Mountain Valleys Resource Conservation and Development, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Progress Energy Carolinas, French Broad EMC, the Madison County School System, the Madison County Cooperative Extension Service, Appalachian State University, Sundance Power and Southwest Wind Power. The schools participating in this initiative are Hot Springs Elementary, Madison Middle School and Madison High School. Each school will have a 2- or 3-kilowatt (kw) wind turbine installed on its property. The first turbine is scheduled to be installed at Madison High in May 2009.

The Appalachian Regional Commission is the project's major sponsor. Mountain Valleys RC&D is the project manager. Each of the project partners is supporting the project financially or through in-kind donations.

"French Broad EMC has long supported renewable energy generation by its membership and is excited to add wind generation to its portfolio," said Jeff Loven, general manager of French Broad Electric. "Educating our youth is a key component in developing renewable energy technologies and ensuring our future energy needs are met in a responsible and affordable manner."

Can you help others save energy?

Send your conservation ideas or questions to us.

P.O. Box 27306, Raleigh, NC 27611, or E-mail: editor@carolinacountry.com

Solar Water Heating for Your House

A CONSUMER'S GUIDE



Turn on a garden hose that has lain in the sun for a while and feel how warm the water is that first comes out. That's solar-heated water with free energy (Btu's) from the sun. You can apply the same heating principle to your home's water supply.

Today's solar water heating systems have come a long way in terms of aesthetics, reliability and longevity; and they require very little maintenance. Because about 20 percent of the average home's energy usage can be devoted to heating water, a solar water heating system can cut back your energy costs year-round. Typically, a properly designed solar hot water system can save 50 to 75 percent of the usual utility cost for residential hot water.

A solar water heating system can cost between \$6,000 and \$8,000 installed, depending upon a variety of factors, such as the location, type and sophistication of the system. Both the state of North Carolina and the federal government offer

tax credits to homeowners and businesses as an extra incentive to those who install certified solar water heating systems (that's a tax "credit" which directly reduces your tax bill). Combined, these tax credits may offset the cost of the average system by about 50 percent. With these incentives, most systems pay for themselves within about seven years, and afterwards continue to heat your water with free Btu's.

Solar technologies also can add value to your home. Many Americans say they would pay a premium for a solar-equipped home. And as energy prices continue to rise, homes with energy-saving features gain value. Solar water heating systems offer that value. Many systems have an expected life-span in the 30-year range.

Drainback and Pressurized Systems

There are two primary types of solar water heating systems: drainback and pressurized. Both use electric pumps to circulate a heat-transfer liquid (such as a glycol-water mix) through roof-mounted collectors, and they rely on heat exchangers to transfer the heat to the home's water supply. (It is important to note that the glycol-water mix and your home's water supply never mix, because they each run via a closed loop.)

While drainback and pressurized systems are about equivalent in terms of efficiency and reliability, drainback systems are more common. A drainback system drains its fluid during extreme high or low temperatures to prevent freezing or overheating of the roof-mounted solar panels, while the fluid is always present in a pressurized system's collector panels. The pressurized system avoids overheating or freezing by using glycol instead of water in the solar collector.

Check your location

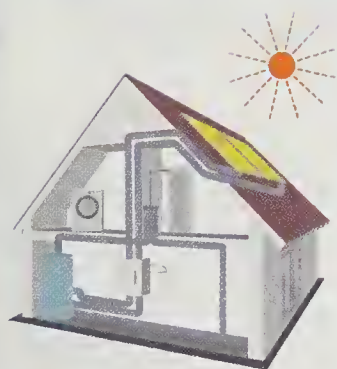
What should you think about before investing in a solar system? First, determine if your site gets good solar exposure. A roof facing in a southerly direction with no shading is best, but it's not an absolute requirement. As long as you have a southernish-facing spot that gets direct sunlight for at least four hours a day and is large enough to hold your solar collectors (about 64 square feet), you should be able to find a solar solution that works for you.

On cloudy days, your back-up heating element (which is included in certified solar water heaters) will kick in to ensure you have hot water whenever you need it. As another option, you may choose to keep a conventional water heater as additional storage for solar-heated water.

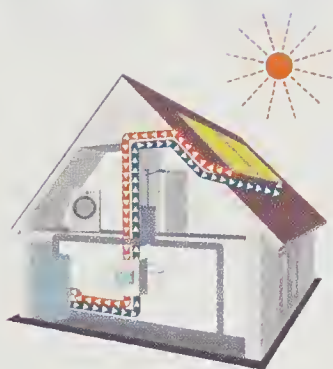
Obstructions to sunlight may be less of an obstacle than certain characteristics of your house. When discussing a system with an installer, ask these questions:

- **Piping:** How difficult will it be to route pipes from the collectors on your sunny roof to the solar water storage tank in the attic or basement? Will sections of wall or floor need to be cut open?
- **Storage tank:** Is there room in the basement or on the ground floor for a solar storage tank that measures 3 feet in diameter and 6 feet in height? Ideally, it will fit near your water heater. Can it be brought through your stairways and doors?

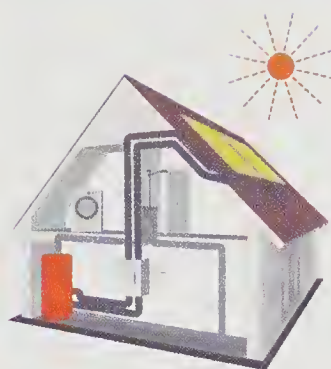
Example of how an active solar water heating system works.



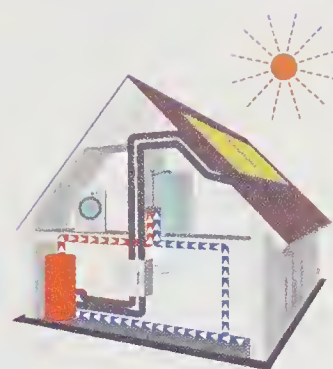
1 Sun heats up liquid inside collectors.



2 Controller pumps hot liquid to the water tank.



3 Hot liquid heats up water inside the tank.



4 Hot water is available for household use.

- **Working conditions:** If you are planning for a roof-mounted collector, is there easy access to the attic? What about the slope and accessibility of the roof? Could an installer work there?
- **Roofing materials:** Can the collectors' supports be readily fastened to the roof? Shingles are easy. Slate and clay tile, which are brittle and chip easily, require extra care.
- **Aesthetics:** How will the collectors alter the appearance of the house? Will you like the way it looks? Will neighbors object?
- **Code requirements:** Does your town, county or homeowners association have any zoning or code requirements affecting solar water systems?

Installation

Find a reputable contractor to design and install the system that's right for your home. Make sure they're fully licensed and insured, and that they warrant and service everything they sell. Ask for references, and make sure they have a 100 percent customer satisfaction guarantee. Ask these questions:

- Does the company have experience installing and maintaining solar water heating systems, especially the kind recommended for your place?
- How many years of experience does the company have with solar heating installation and maintenance?
- Does the company have a plumbing license? Confirm licensing with the North Carolina licensing board. The N.C. Plumbing and Heating Board can also tell you about any complaints against state-licensed contractors. North Carolina State Board of Examiners of Plumbing and Heating Contractors. 1109 Dresser Court, Raleigh, NC. Phone: (919) 875-3612. www.nclicensing.org.

The North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners establishes standards and educational opportunities for solar thermal installers. Check your installer's status at www.nabcep.org.

Maintenance

Discuss maintenance requirements with your system provider, and consult the system's owner's manual. Plumbing and other conventional water heating components require the same maintenance as conventional systems. Regular maintenance on simple systems can be as infrequent as every three to five years, preferably by a solar contractor. Systems with electrical components usually require a replacement part or two after 10 years.

Once your system is up and running, you'll feel good knowing you're doing your part to reduce greenhouse gas emissions—not to mention your power bill. You could even see a welcome reduction on next year's tax bill—saving money, saving energy and saving the environment. 🌱

Resources:

Division of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy, U.S. Dept. of Energy. www.eere.energy.gov.

North Carolina Solar Center. www.ncsc.ncsu.edu.

Database of State Incentives for Renewables and Efficiency (DSIRE). www.dsireusa.org.

Thanks to Southern Energy Management and Velux for resource help and graphics. Southern Energy Management is a leading provider of sustainable energy services in North Carolina. (866) 575-9191. www.southern-energy.com.



SOLD!

By Carla Burgess

Many folks think of auctions as highbrow affairs where well-heeled buyers spar over fine art and Chippendale chairs. Add the word “estate” in front of auction, and it really sounds exclusive. But whether an auction house sells off an entire estate or a mixture of consigned pieces, you’re as likely to find common items as a precious painting. In nearly the same breath, the auctioneer may sell a cake plate for \$5 and a dining room set for thousands.

Pretty much wherever you live in North Carolina, you can find an auction within comfortable driving distance almost any day of the week. Auctions are usually advertised in the paper. You can also go to www.auctionzip.com and type in your zip code to find auctions close by.

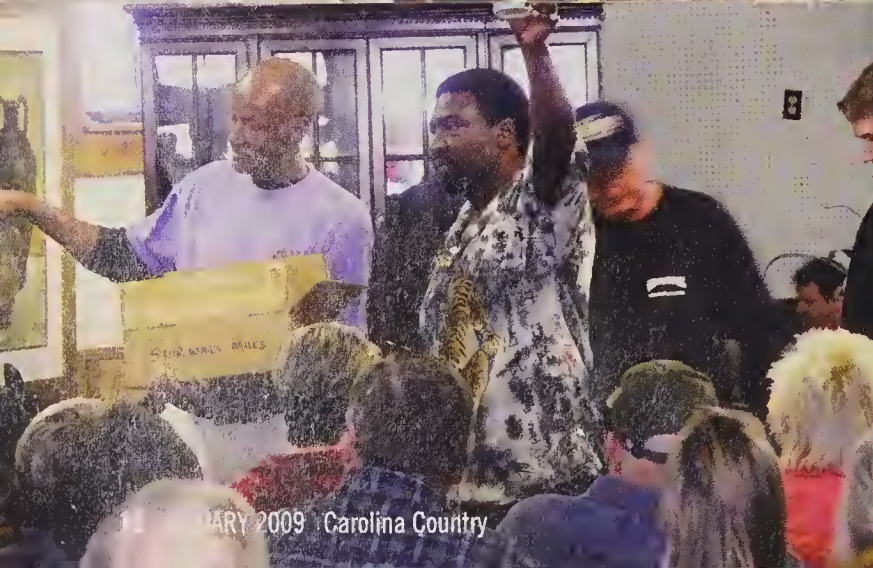
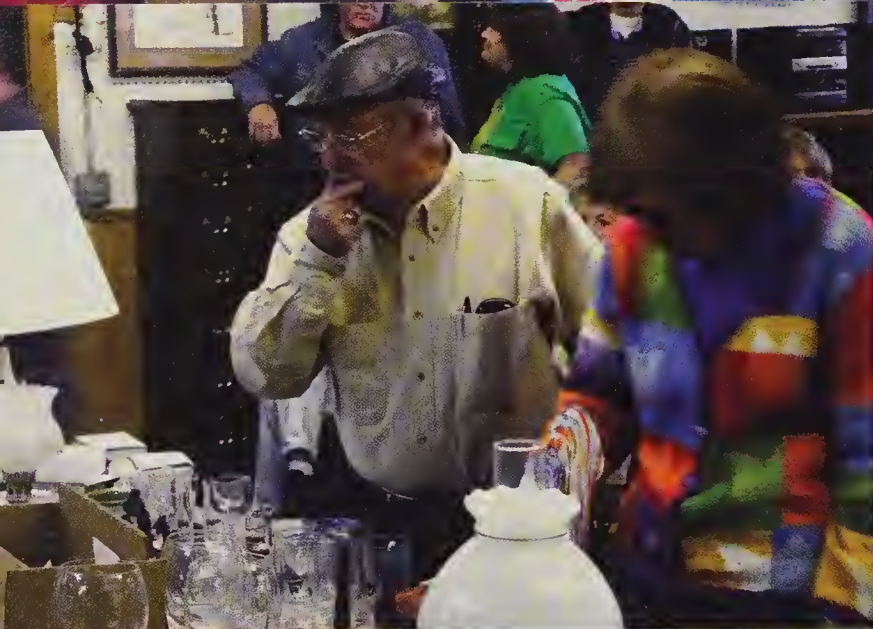
Patrick Holloway, a retired civil engineer, regularly goes to auction houses in Raleigh, Mebane, Louisburg and other parts of the state. He looks for deals on furniture, jewelry and knickknacks that he resells on weekends at the State Fairgrounds flea market in Raleigh. He also collects, repairs and sells watches. “I’ve bought watches for \$2 that were worth hundreds,” he says. About five years ago, he started going



to tag sales, “and it kind of escalated.” But Holloway is a cool-headed buyer. Like many seasoned pros, he recommends setting a limit on what you’re willing to spend before the bidding starts. “It’s easy to get caught up in the moment and before you know it, you’ve paid twice what something’s worth.”

Anyone who has watched “Antiques Road Show” on TV knows that just because something’s old doesn’t mean it’s worth a lot of money. If you want to invest in collectibles, for example Depression glass, it’s easy to find out the current value for particular pieces in reference guides. Such books also explain how to tell a reproduction from the real deal.

Many auction-goers buy things simply because they like them. At the sale of a deceased person’s estate, neighbors and friends often like to have a remembrance. “They’re buying sentiment—you can’t really put a price



Top: Auctioneer and co-owner Jay Hoy calls a sale at Hoy Auction Co. in Wake Forest.

Middle photos: Auction-goers scope out the goods at a sale preview.

Bottom: Ringmen Dave McCants (L) and Patrick Cope (R) at Hoy Auction Co. stir the crowd’s interest in lots up for bid.

(Photography by Salstrand Studio, Raleigh)

The culture of North Carolina estate auctions includes the showmen, the ringmen, the regulars, and someone who brings the cookies.

tag on that," says Jim Hoy, who runs Hoy Auction Company in Wake Forest with his son Jay.

Practical, everyday items are a staple at many auctions. Alongside the unusual and the unique, you may find lawnmowers, bookcases, toys, dishes, tools, books, clocks, pottery, lamps, rugs, couches and appliances.

Sheila Carver, who runs Magnolia Manor Plantation Bed and Breakfast in Warrenton, furnished almost the entire 6,000 square feet of the mid-18th-century home with antique furniture she bought at Hoy Auction over a period of five years. Many a night has found her sitting patiently in her seat, cross-stitching or quilting to pass the time between bids. She even finds creative uses for items that are past their prime. At a recent auction, she was the winning bidder—at \$1—on a couple of battered quilts. "I'm going to use them to make Christmas stockings," she says.

The regulars

Not everyone goes to auctions to buy things. Visit an auction house more

than a few times, and you'll spot them: the regulars. They bid occasionally, but mostly watch the sale and chew the fat. At Raleigh Auction and Estate Sales, a plate of chocolate chip cookies always mysteriously appears at some point during the night and makes its way through the crowd. A vendor sells hamburgers and fried bologna sandwiches in the parking lot. At a recent sale at Hoy Auction, a vendor served up flounder and hushpuppies. It's in the sellers' interest to keep everyone fed, happy and in their seats.

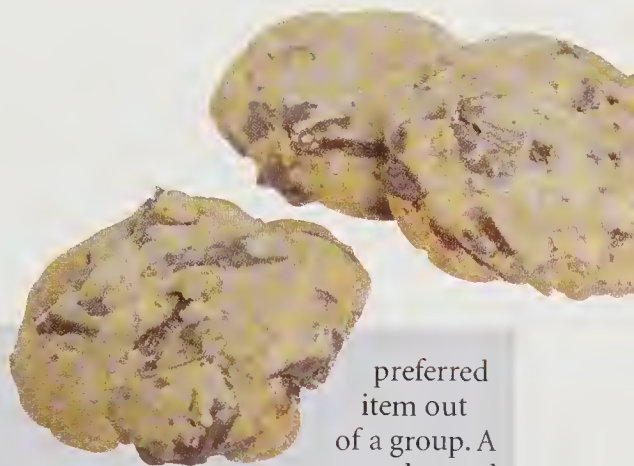
Auctions are usually fast-paced. A seasoned auctioneer will keep things moving at a good clip, selling one or two items a minute. And there's a bit of showmanship involved. Many auctions have employees or "ringmen" that hoot and holler to stir up interest in an item.

"You don't want to have your audience dozing," says Joe Veasey, an auctioneer who calls sales at Raleigh Auction and Mebane Antique Auction Gallery. He'll interject a joke or gently tease a bidder he knows just to liven things up. Like many auctioneers, he

has developed a distinct style over the years. "Just like singers, you practice day in and day out. I practice riding down the road."

In his prime, Jim Hoy was once clocked at four items per minute. He takes to the floor with his microphone every now and again, but these days Jay mostly calls the auctions from the booth. "I still enjoy it, but now I'm old and slow," he says with a laugh. Hoy has been in business for 32 years. The bargains, along with the comfortable, friendly atmosphere inside the cozy building on Main Street, have kept his customers loyal. "We tell people we're the biggest little auction house in North Carolina." 🍪

Carla Burgess is a Carolina Country contributing writer who lives in Raleigh.



preferred item out of a group. A second round of bidding fol-

lows, and that winner gets to choose from the remaining items. Bidding continues until all items in the group have been sold.

The Beginners Guide to Auctions

- Show up early to look over the merchandise. Use the opportunity to thoroughly inspect items. Don't be shy about asking something to be plugged in or otherwise powered up. If an item has major flaws, the auctioneer should say so. Otherwise, items are sold as is.
- Decide the highest price you're willing to pay for an item and stick to it. Try to stay out of a bidding war that will quickly launch you out of your financial comfort zone.
- Resist the urge to bid right away. The auctioneer usually begins at a high starting place and continues to lower the price incrementally until someone jumps in with a bid.
- Register for a bidding card/number as soon as you arrive. You

don't have to use it, but you'll be prepared in case something on the block strikes your fancy. Bid with your card, not by raising your hand or nodding. Raise it up prominently so the auctioneer can see you and note your bid.

- Bring a seat cushion, snacks, a book or whatever else you need to be comfortable. Auctions usually go on until the last item is sold, and you may find you can't pull yourself away!
- A "lot" is an item or group of items (such as a set of something or a box of goods or "boxed lot") that is sold as a single unit. Sometimes a group of items will be auctioned as "your choice", for example a batch of tools or collection of jewelry. The winning bidder earns the option to select his

- Some auction houses add a "buyer's premium" (usually 10 to 15 percent) to the final cost of the item. Make sure you know about any surcharges and remember to factor that cost into your bidding ceiling.
- Many auction houses post lists and photos of items to be sold at upcoming auctions on their Web sites. This is a convenient way to keep your eye out for special items on your wish list.

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Why would we do this? Our real goal is to build a long term client relationship with you. We are sure that most of you will become loyal Stauer clients in the years to come, but for now, in this lousy economy, we will give you these pearls to help with your future gift giving ideas.

We did find a magnificent cache of cultured pearls at the best price that I have ever seen. Our pearl dealer was stuck. A large luxury department store in

financial trouble cancelled a large order at the last minute so we grabbed all of them. He sold us an enormous cache of his roundest, whitest, most iridescent cultured 5 1/2-6mm pearls for only pennies on the dollar.

But let me get to the point: his loss is your gain. Many of you may be wondering about your next gift for someone special. In the past, Stauer has made gift giving easier with the absolute lowest prices on fine jewelry and luxury goods. This year, we've really come to the rescue.

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Down the Drain

Your stories of throwing good money after bad



All those Beanie Babies

I can honestly say that the dumbest investment I ever made was collecting Beanie Babies. I would get up early to be first in line to get that long awaited bear or dog, cat or any other critter. I placed a lot of telephone orders when I could not find that special Beanie. I even subscribed to a magazine to keep me informed of all the latest happenings. The stories of how valuable they would be in 2008 proved untrue. I ate a lot of McDonalds food just to get the little Beanie Babies with their logo. Posters, trading cards. I even purchased a china cabinet to display everything in it. I started collecting Coca Cola Beanies. You would not believe how many I have stored.

Needless to say, my collecting days are over. I drove a lot of miles, wasted time and spent money. I guess it was fun. And I know that I wasn't the only one to learn a valuable lesson.

Louise Freeman, Elkin, Surry-Yadkin EMC

Nothing but rebates

A few years back I was a Rebate Queen. Everything I purchased either came with a rebate or with a coupon.

I got hooked on www.cyberrebate.com—an online purchase site where everything was 100 percent “free,” even shipping. But you had to file a very tedious rebate form with each item. The site made it almost impossible to get the rebate correct, which is how the site made their money. An example of their pricing was a package of light bulbs that would normally cost \$10 would cost \$40 on this site.

This went on for about a year and a half. Then the company went bankrupt and left people waiting for their rebates. Meanwhile, people owed thousands of dollars on their charge cards. I was lucky because my charge card company wrote off all Cyberrebate charges. But not all companies were that understanding.

If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.


Doris Carlton, Rocky Point, Four County EMC

Old Purple

The first time I saw the 1994 purple flare-side Ford truck I was hooked. When the owner placed a “For Sale” sign on it, I made him an offer he didn't refuse.

For a month, my sister Dolly Smith and I enjoyed my used truck. We hauled shrubs and potting soil, visited off-the-road family cemeteries, and checked out abandoned country stores in southern Wayne County.

Then the trouble started. A dead battery, a flat tire. Buying a new battery and plugging the tire didn't help. I carried around a battery jumper cable and an air pump as required equipment. Buyer's remorse hit hard!

My mechanic removed a basket full of “added on” wiring that previous owners used for alarm systems, speakers, etc. He also replaced the ignition switch. And he located a short circuit that was draining the battery. Gas was costing almost \$4 per gallon. This was the dumbest investment I ever made! 

Betty Williams, Mount Olive, Tri-County EMC



Thanks to everyone who sent us stories of dumb investments you made. We did not have the space to publish more. Next month we'll publish stories of lessons you learned from grandparents. {Deadline was Dec. 15}.

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March 2009

Tacky Lawn Ornaments

Send photos of the tackiest lawn ornaments you've ever seen.

Deadline: January 15

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Old-Fashioned Summer

Send stories and photos of what summer was like in the old days.

Deadline: February 15

May 2009

Inside My Dream Home

What would go inside your dream home? Already there? Send photos.

Deadline: March 15

The Rules

1. Approximately 200 words or less.
2. One entry per household per month.
3. Photos are welcome. Digital photos should be a minimum of 1200 by 800 pixels.
4. E-mailed or typed, if possible. Otherwise, make it legible.
5. Include your name, electric co-op, mailing address and phone number.
6. If you want your entry returned, please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope. (We will not return others.)
7. We pay \$50 for each submission published. We retain reprint rights.
8. We will post on our Web site more entries than we publish, but can't pay for those submissions. (Let us know if you don't agree to this.)
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E-mail: finer@carolinacountry.com
Online: www.carolinacountry.com

How to handle a tractor load full of young'ns

I grew up around the restaurant business with my parents and kinfolk owning restaurants in several parts of North Carolina. I honestly believe the reason my parents had children was for the free labor. I can remember peeling potatoes when I wasn't being punished. I stood on a metal milk crate making milkshakes after Swain County High School football games until the early hours of the morning.

My parents' restaurant was located in the mountains of Bryson City, a small tourist town. On one side of town is Cherokee Indian Reservation and on the other is a community called Natahala, which is a Cherokee Indian word for "land of the noon day sun." People who visit either fall in love with the area or they never want to return.

During the summer months business was hectic at the restaurant. Many days we had sales in the thousands of dollars, and this was during the early 1960s when cheeseburgers were 25 cents and milkshakes were 75 cents. Back then there were no chain restaurants, and my parents' restaurant was the fast-food place of choice.

My parents owned an old house back in a rural community called Ela. My grandmother would come up during the summer and keep the kids: my sister, myself, a couple of cousins and distant kin, or as some would say, "a tractor load full of young'ns."

The old house was built out of aged oak planks and set on stilts that had a definite lean to one side. There was no indoor plumbing, and the only heat was from the wood-burning cook stove in the kitchen. We had no air conditioning, but a giant oak and poplar trees gave relief from the summer heat. Our water came from a natural spring out back, and we carried it to the house. One of our other luxuries was the outhouse.

Inside, the house had bare walls and linoleum floors. One room in the back had no entrance or windows, and as far as I remember you couldn't get into the room. My sister and cousins would tell me that was where they put the kids who misbehaved. To this day I still don't know what was in that room or what it was used for. I must have been a good kid because I never got put in there.

In the quiet valley were several acres of land, a horse, cows, a barn and one big garden. The garden produced fresh corn, juicy tomatoes, green beans and the other typical garden stuff. But as a short kid, I always got the chore of picking the cucumbers.

Cucumbers grow on the

ground, and snakes love to hide in their leaves. Let's just say that short, fat boys can run fast because we are more aerodynamically sound!


We went unsupervised all day, and our only rule was to be back before dark. Even though the front yard was barren of grass, on most sunny days we used a hoe and tons of imagination to fill it with pretend roads and make-believe towns.

Nearby were trees to climb, creeks to cool off our hot tired feet, and springs filled with delicious mountain water. A community tin cup hung on the tree, and no one ever complained about drinking after someone else did. If we got hungry, we ate blueberries, figs and strawberries that were never washed and always eaten with dirty fingers.

As evening set in, we could hear my grandmother yelling loud enough to cover a country mile. We found our way back to find supper and hot baths waiting. Believe it or not, you can wash a tractor load full of young'ns in one tin tub full of water heated from the stove and tempered by the spring out back.

After everyone was clean and fed, we would finally settle down to a choice of two black-and-white television stations. My grandmother would faithfully watch "Bonanza" and the "Lawrence Welk Show," and we kids would watch "The Flintstones." Whatever other shows there were I can't remember.

Out in the night air we heard the sounds of crickets and hoot owls. The only thing you had to worry about was an occasional thunderstorm or a bad case of the chiggers. Alcohol took care of mosquito bites. Poison oak got calamine lotion. The occasional scrape or cut got Mercurochrome. And if you were acting up or out of sorts, Grandma's remedy was a good dose of Fletcher's Castoria.

Every time I go to Bryson City I ride up into Ela to see that old house. Someone bought the house years back and fixed it up, adding on to it and growing grass in the front yard. The place just doesn't seem as large as it used to. But I still wonder about that room on the back side of the house—the one with no windows or doors—and I wonder if it is still there. 



By Howard Black

By the grace of God and constitutionally guaranteed, Howard Black pokes fun at the realities of life, politics and human insanity.

He lives in Cherryville and can be reached by e-mail at howardblack@birch.net.





Keep the change

By Richard Bauman

When you buy some thing and it costs some dollars and cents (for example, \$2.13), do you scrounge in your pocket or purse for the coins to make “exact change”? If you do, you might be overlooking an easy way to put aside hundreds of dollars a year. By using only folding money instead, the change you set aside can add up to several hundred dollars a year.

How can you amass that money? It’s really simple. No matter what you’re buying, never use coins to pay for it. Then every day retrieve from pocket or purse the change you received from your paper money purchases and put those coins into a special container. Believe it or not, within three or four months you will probably have saved about \$100. If you never take back any of those coins, you can amass several hundred dollars in a year’s time. And you can do a lot of good with that money.

About eight years ago my wife and I heard financial expert Suze Orman recommend that people save their change, all of it, and use the accumulated coins to invest in the stock market. Donna and I started doing that and in a year typically totaled \$400–\$500 in coins. She counted it on a monthly basis and when we had \$100 we invested it.

About five years ago we changed direction and decided to “invest” that money in programs that help others have a better life. We picked three different organizations to support: one that feeds the hungry (Food for the Poor), another provides decent housing to those who need it (Habitat for Humanity), and another that helps people become self-sufficient (Heifer Project).

Saving our change has become a habit for us. It is an odd time when we spend any coins we have. Additionally, when we walk into our house any change we have, regardless of the amount, is tossed into our coin collector—an old white milk can in the kitchen. The coins stay there and don’t come out until counted.

How much of a difference can your unspent change make? Here’s an example from the Heifer Project. A \$120 in donations was used to buy a goat for a family in Africa. The goat was pregnant and had two kids. The family sold one of the kids. They also sold surplus goat milk and amassed \$800—more money than they ever dreamed of having. With it they paid for school tuition, books and uniforms for the family’s oldest daughter. But that’s not all. They were able to put a new roof on their simple house, and buy some other necessities. The goat’s milk also provided nourishment for the family as well as being a source of income. Thus that initial \$120 in donations effectively grew more than tenfold.

Your coins, from pennies to quarters, saved, day-in and day-out, will add up to dollars. Those dollars can help change lives for the better. All you have to do is spend more paper money and keep the change.

Richard Bauman is author of “Awe-Full Moments: Spirituality in the Commonplace,” a book about God working in our lives through everyday events. Go to www.richardbauman.com

Sensible saving can help build retirement funds

By David Crosson

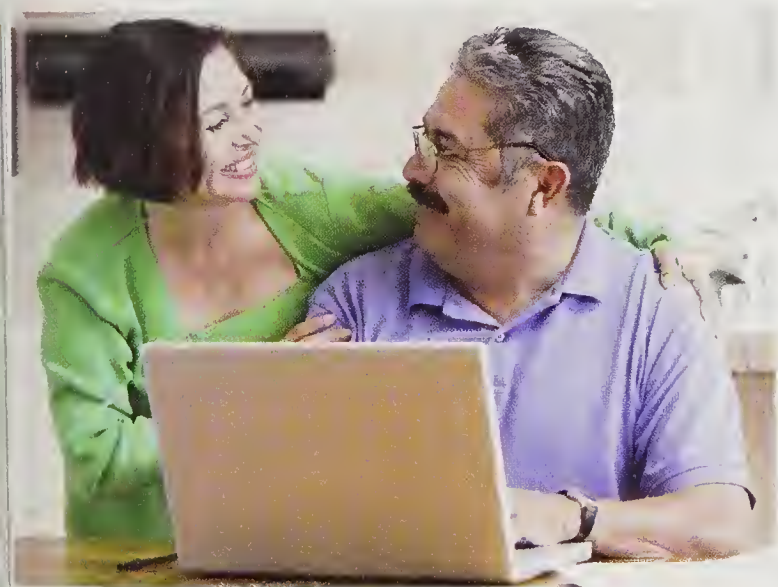
Americans are living longer and healthier lives, but those lengthening lives also are costing more and more money.

Are there ways to cover the rising costs? The simple answer is "yes." An extra \$100, for instance, set aside monthly and growing at a rate of 8 percent, can become a tidy \$60,000 over 20 years of compounding.

But where do you find that extra money? For starters, you might turn to the old adage, "Use what you need, but need what you use." In other words, are there drains on your budget you can plug without changing the quality of your life?

Consider the following tips for saving some extra money:

- To save on fuel costs, try carpooling or public transportation where available. If you're a commuter, joining others for the ride to and from work will provide savings not only on gas, but also on wear and tear to your vehicle. **Potential savings: \$60 per month.**
- Sharing the weekly shopping run with a neighbor can mean substantial savings and a chance for a good chat as well. **Potential savings: \$20 per month.**
- When was the last time you took a good look at your insurance policies? Do you have duplicate or unnecessary coverage? Premiums on many policies can be lowered by increasing deductibles. And don't forget to shop around for competitive policies. **Potential savings: \$20 per month.**
- Have you fully explored the opportunities for saving online? It's not just for airline tickets. Are you an avid reader? You can find real bargains on used books and other items by shopping around on the Internet. **Potential savings: A lot!**



The trick to accomplishing these sorts of cost-cutting measures is taking the time to discover them. Over time, you will see your retirement funds grow at an accelerated rate—without giving up anything that you need.

David Crosson is a senior communications advisor on pension and retirement issues with the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

Finding your best career after retirement...is it possible?

By Greg Dimeris

Some find retirement and the changes that accompany it challenging. Others simply accept this new stage in life with ease and enjoyment. Perhaps, you already decided where and how you want to spend your working-life savings. On the other hand, you may be wary about how you are going to live off your savings after retirement, and what you are going to do with your idle time.


As it turns out, deciding what to do during retirement may be more important than worrying about how much money you have in savings.

What retirement could mean for you

A research survey from HSBC Bank reported that 64 percent of Americans view retirement as an opportunity for a whole new chapter in life. In the same survey, only 23 percent of Americans reported that retirement is a time for rest. Having income and something meaningful to do were cited as additional reasons to keep working after retirement.

So how do you find ways to keep busy and happy after retirement and to rediscover your passions in life? For starters, if you like your current work environment and you are physically able, look for part-time or consulting opportunities there. You may want to go back and pursue earlier dreams or rediscover old hobbies. Maybe it is time to make them a reality by expanding your skills and trying out a completely new field.

In addition, you might want to follow these simple steps to help you discover your options:

- Take time to evaluate your interests and desires when you are approaching retirement.
- Write down your skills, your strengths and weaknesses.
- Survey your friends and relatives about your skills, strengths and weaknesses.
- Take up activities that could lead to a new career on the side, such as volunteer work, taking a class or a part-time job.
- Join local organizations—get involved in your community.
- Books and Web sites provide job ideas and information about how to transfer your skills into exciting and rewarding new careers. For example, check out Monster's Web site for "Careers at 50+" at <http://careersat50.monster.com>
- Another good resource for locating "senior friendly" employers is the AARP Web site at www.aarp.org/money/careers 

Greg Dimeris is a senior investment communications specialist for retirement programs at the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

Adding efficiency to RVs

Major RV manufacturers all reported a downturn in sales when the price of fuel started to climb. A typical RV weighs more and gets worse gas mileage than an 18-wheeler truck, and those who might have bought one to save on lodging and food are now realizing that filling 'er up might end up costing more than hotels and restaurants.

But some RV manufacturers are incorporating new features and designing new models with better fuel efficiency.

According to the Web site RV.net, several factors go into designing a greener RV. First is reducing weight by using lighter materials and improving the structural design. Reducing the size of RV engines also can help reduce fuel consumption—if owners can live with trading off some horsepower. More efficient transmissions, better aerodynamics and non-powered engine cooling may be coming.

Some of these features can be found in the new Avanti line of RVs from Damon Motor Coach, which offers a 70 percent or more increase in fuel economy over other large ("Class A") RVs. Damon essentially converted the ultra-efficient chassis, engine and transmission of a leading parcel delivery fleet truck—package delivery companies optimize for fuel efficiency to save on fuel—for use as an RV. The Avanti's chassis also sits lower than other RVs, so it gets less wind resistance. These factors add up in fuel efficiency—14.5 miles per gallon—double that of other RVs in its class.

Roadtrek takes stripped down commercial vans—such as the Chevrolet Express or Dodge Sprinter—and converts them into deluxe, although smaller, motor homes with fuel efficiency ranging from 15 to 30 mpg. Sportsmobile also offers a range of converted GM and Ford vans customized as motor homes. Owners of Volkswagen's popular "pop-top" Eurovan, discontinued in North America in 2003, can reportedly sell their vans for what they paid for them new, even with high mileage, due to surging demand and lack of supply.

Another option is to put a "slide-in" camper-top onto an existing pick-up truck. The additional weight will lower fuel efficiency slightly, but you'll still get much better mileage than with any kind of large RV. Those used to roomier accommodations might opt to tow a "fifth-wheel"—a large RV-style trailer with all the amenities.

To learn more: Damon Motor Coach, www.damonrv.com; RV.net, www.rv.net; Roadtrek, www.roadtrek.com; Sportsmobile, www.sportsmobile.com.

Safer fabric softeners

It's nice to have clothes that feel soft, smell fresh and are free of static cling, but both conventional dryer sheets and liquid fabric softeners contain chemicals known to be toxic to people after sustained exposure.


According to the Web site Sixwise.com, some of the most harmful ingredients in dryer sheets and liquid fabric softener include benzyl acetate (linked to pancreatic cancer), benzyl alcohol (an upper respiratory tract irritant), ethanol (linked to central nervous system disorders), limonene (a known carcinogen) and chloroform (a neurotoxin and carcinogen), among others.



RV makers are scrambling to green up their offerings in response to consumer demand and high fuel prices. Damon Motor Coach's Avanti (shown) offers a 70 percent or more increase in fuel economy over other large ("Class A") RVs.

Since fabric softeners are designed to stay in your clothes for extended periods, such chemicals can seep out gradually and be inhaled or absorbed directly through the skin. Liquid fabric softeners are slightly preferable to dryer sheets, because the chemicals in dryer sheets get released into the air when they heat up in the dryer and can pose a respiratory health risk to those both inside and outside the home.

National Geographic's "Green Guide" recommends adding either a quarter cup of baking soda or a quarter cup of white vinegar to the wash cycle. Either one will soften clothes, while the latter will also address static cling. (Be sure not to mix either with bleach, though, as resulting chemical reactions could cause noxious fumes.) If eliminating static cling is your top priority, try drying natural-fiber clothes separately from synthetic materials. The combination of cotton and polyester is often the culprit behind static cling. Better yet, line dry synthetic clothing.

A few companies have heeded the call for greener, safer ways to soften clothes and reduce static cling. Seventh Generation's Natural Lavender Scent Fabric Softener and Ecover's Natural Fabric Softener rely on vegetable products and natural essential oils to get the job done. Maddocks' Static Eliminator is a non-toxic, hypoallergenic reusable dryer sheet made out of a chemical-free polynylon. 

To learn more: Seventh Generation, www.seventhgeneration.com; Sixwise.com, www.sixwise.com; Ecover, www.ecover.com; The Green Guide, www.thegreenguide.com; Maddocks' Static Eliminator, www.staticeliminator.ca.

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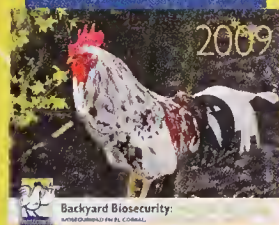
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TWICE TOLD TALE

In 1906 Thomas Edison, Henry Ford and Harvey Firestone came to western North Carolina to rest and enjoy the scenery. They stayed in Asheville a while, then headed for the Smoky Mountains in a White Steamer touring car which Edison had shipped to Asheville ahead of their visit.

Columnist Bob Terrell of the ASHEVILLE CITIZEN-TIMES recently recounted the story from the newspaper's files.

Probably nobody west of Asheville had ever seen an automobile in those days. A man named Jesse Seago used to tell this tale on himself. He was sitting on his front porch in Jackson County when he saw and heard something strange coming 'round the mountain.

"When that thing came into full view I bounded out of my swing and ran right through the screen door, taking the door with me," he said. "I ran into the kitchen and shouted to my wife, 'Get ready! Here comes Elijah and the Chariot of Fire!'"

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Watercolors by Rawlings

Gail Rawlings, an artist who lives in Lake Gaston and is a member of Halifax EMC and the North Carolina Watercolor Society, sells a collection of original watercolors inspired by the beauty of the lake and countryside around her. Rawlings also creates portraits, house portraits and other subjects from photographs submitted to her. The image shown is titled "Winter Glow" and is available in two sizes: the 7-by-9 inch image with single mat (outside dimension is 11-by-14) sells for \$30; and the 4-by-6 inch image with single mat (outside dimension is 8-by-10) sells for \$15. Larger sizes for other paintings are available.

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Amish country market

Yoder's, an Amish-style bulk food market in Caswell County, offers a wide assortment of regular and gluten-free, organic and sugar-free products, including cereals, beans, cookie and bread mixes, soup mixes and freshly ground flours. Their items include yesteryear goodies such as sweet potato butter, birch beer, horehound candy, and homemade apple and peach fried pies, furniture and housewares. Yoder's Country Market sits at the intersection of N.C. 86 and U.S. 158 in Yanceyville, and has an in-house bakery, ice cream parlor, and sandwich shop that sells Amish meats and cheeses on homemade rolls. Yoder's is open Monday through Friday at 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m., and on Saturday from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., and also sells online. A pint of no-sugar-added blueberry jam sells for \$4.25.

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on the bookshelf

"Bark House Style"

Resurrected from a practice that first began in North Carolina in the 1800s, using bark shingles makes for attractive, sustainable design. Bark requires no toxic chemical treatments, can be harvested locally and can live (again) for a century or more. It also marries well with other rustic materials, including stone, log, glass, wrought iron and copper. In this new book, bark is shown in a diverse, visually pleasing range of architectural styles, including Adirondack, Cowboy, Old Linville and modern. Co-authors Chris McCurry and Nan Chase also present an informative narrative of bark house history that includes vintage photos of old bark house style. McCurry, along with her husband Marty, founded Highland Craftsmen, a company based in Spruce Pine that produces bark shingles and other green building materials. The couple is credited with helping to bring back contemporary indoor-outdoor bark house design. Nan Chase, a contributing editor of WNC Magazine, writes about architecture and landscape design from her western North Carolina home. "Bark House Style: Sustainable Designs From Nature" is published by Gibbs Smith in Layton, Utah. Hardcover, 152 pages, \$30.

(800) 835-4993

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Retro Crafts

This guide to the quirky world of retro crafts offers a fun range of crafts, from the ridiculous to the sublime. It features 40 retro-inspired projects—from glitter frames and matchbox purses to bottlecap men and teacup ladies. Baby-boomers will remember the Plastic Flower Pixies, Sparkling Sputnik, the Beauty Orb, and the unforgettable Reinbeer. Written by Suzie Millions, a diva of the style, it's packed with color and black-and-white images from vintage pamphlets, collections and flea market hunts. Millions, an artist and collector in Asheville, also gives the lowdown on collecting, "Junking 101," and creating a crafting group. "The Complete Book of Retro Crafts" is published by Lark Books in Asheville, a division of Sterling Publishing. Softcover, 176 pages, \$14.95.

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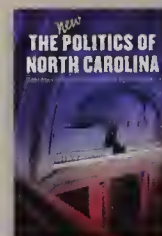


"The Politics of North Carolina"

In the 11 essays collected here, leading scholars of North Carolina politics offer a systematic analysis of North Carolina's politics and policy, placed in the context of its own history as well as other states' politics and policies. Edited by Christopher A. Cooper and H. Gibbs Knotts, topics include the evolution of politics and political institutions; the roles of governors, the judicial branch, interest groups, and party systems; and the part played by economic development and environmental policy. Contributors, who include Thomas Eamon of East Carolina University, Christopher Cooper of Western Carolina, Charles Prysby of UNC at Greensboro and Ruth Ann Strickland of Appalachian State, also address how geography affects politics within the state, region, and nation. Softcover, 328 pages, \$22.95.

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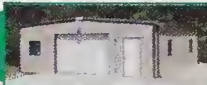
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31	10.24	9.36	11.59	10.72	18.81	17.06	51	21.53	18.03	31.94	25.81	59.50	47.25
32	10.33	9.45	12.03	10.94	19.69	17.50	52	22.84	19.08	33.91	27.34	63.44	50.31
33	10.33	9.45	12.47	11.38	20.56	18.38	53	24.33	20.30	36.09	29.09	67.81	53.81
34	10.33	9.45	12.91	11.81	21.44	19.25	54	25.99	21.70	38.94	31.50	73.50	58.63
35	10.41	9.54	13.56	12.47	22.75	20.56	55	27.91	23.19	42.00	33.91	79.63	63.44
36	10.59	9.63	13.78	12.69	23.19	21.00	56	29.58	23.89	45.50	35.44	86.63	66.50
37	10.85	9.89	13.78	12.69	23.19	21.00	57	31.59	24.68	49.66	36.97	94.94	69.56
38	11.29	10.24	14.00	12.91	23.63	21.44	58	33.95	25.64	54.03	38.72	103.69	73.06
39	11.73	10.68	14.22	13.13	24.06	21.88	59	36.58	26.69	59.72	41.13	115.06	77.88
40	11.90	10.76	14.44	13.34	24.50	22.31	60	40.25	28.18	65.84	43.53	127.31	82.69
41	12.51	11.38	15.09	14.00	25.81	23.63	61	42.61	29.23	72.41	47.25	140.44	90.13
42	13.04	11.73	15.97	14.66	27.56	24.94	62	45.94	30.71	79.84	51.41	155.31	98.44
43	13.56	12.16	17.06	15.53	29.75	26.69	63	49.61	32.38	87.72	56.00	171.06	107.63
44	14.18	12.78	18.16	16.41	31.94	28.44	64	55.21	34.91	98.00	61.91	191.63	119.44
45	14.96	13.39	19.47	17.50	34.56	30.63	65	61.25	37.45	109.38	68.47	214.38	132.56
46	15.84	14.09	21.00	18.59	37.63	32.81	66	69.74	43.23	121.19	77.88	238.00	151.38
47	16.89	14.79	22.97	19.69	41.56	35.00	67	79.98	49.26	134.53	88.59	264.69	172.81
48	17.94	15.40	24.94	21.00	45.50	37.63	68	91.88	56.26	148.75	99.97	293.13	195.56
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From Vivian Carpenter, Cherryville



From Frances Farmer, Madison

- ... You have relatives that are buried in the front yard.
- ... You have a special graveyard for your favorite dogs, cats, horses and other animals, and you visit them regularly.
- ... You had an uncle who would whittle wooden toys for you to play with.
- ... Your grandmother brewed JFG coffee in a cast iron coffee pot on a wood stove.
- ... Your grandfather always kept a new pair of bib overalls for church and special occasions.
- ... Your grandmother acted as a midwife and delivered several of her own grandchildren.
- ... All of the mules that your grandfather owned were named "Roadie".

From Juanita Moore, Cornelius

- ... You waited by railroad tracks for the train, so you could get candy that the engineers threw out the window.
- ... You took turns getting inside old tires to be pushed down the hills.
- ... Each Saturday you went to get a nickel surprise bag.
- ... Girls walked the plank across the canal and boys walked the pipes.

From Vivian Carpenter, Cherryville

- ... You caught crawdads and cut them open to get their pearls.
- ... You slid down gully banks and got so-o-o dirty.
- ... You cracked hickory nuts on the big rock near the spring box and picked out the goodies with a bobby pin.
- ... Your Mama made you hold the cow's tail while she milked to keep the cow from swatting flies and hitting Mama in the face.
- ... You had an old "jump plank" which sat on a rock near the barn.
- ... You coasted down the hill in your wagon from the Hickory Wagon Company.
- ... You had "chaney berry" fights.
- ... You made dolls from molly pop flowers.
- ... You lived between Hog Hill and Cat Square.
- ... You went "Christmas boogering."
- ... At Christmas your family went to North Wilkesboro to get your apples out of cold storage and buy peppermint stick candy and chocolates.
- ... Your Mom put a sassafras branch (cut exactly to your height) in the darkest corner of the closet to keep you from having pneumonia again, and it worked!

From Gaylia Forbes, Hudson

- ... You were flogged by roosters and chased by angry cows who disliked children.
- ... Thanksgiving weekend was hog-butcher time when you cured hams using a family recipe of spices, and women were busy canning and freezing pork.
- ... You shook up the big jar of milk in the refrigerator to mix in the cream before pouring a glass.
- ... Your father plowed and wagon-trained with mules and considered them superior and more beautiful than horses.
- ... Churches had singings and revivals when members visited each other's churches and then scheduled baptisin' at a designated spot in the creek.
- ... On rainy days, you settled atop the stacks of baled hay under the barn's tin roof with a book and a purring barn cat for company.
- ... Summer evenings neighbors visited on front porches while the children played and caught lightning bugs in the jar as dusk fell, and all was right with the world.
- ... Each spring, your mother took you spring greens picking through the fields and pastures, and she knew all the edible wild tender plants.
- ... You know that "leather britches" are dried green beans strung up to dry.

From Nancy and Bobby, Stanly County

- ... You always look forward to hog killing because for dinner you had pinto beans and baked back bones and ribs, fried tenderloin and cathead biscuits.
- ... Your mama would tell you to follow that old hen and see where she laid her eggs.
- ... In summer, all the kids had to work in the garden in the evening, then sit on the front porch later and have a RC and a moon pie.
- ... You cooked beets in the old wash pot.
- ... For supper you had scalded lettuce, cornbread and milk.
- ... You put rags soaked in kerosene around your ankles when you went blackberry picking, to keep the red jagers off.
- ... On the mornings and evenings when you went to milk the old cow, the cats would line up and you would squirt milk in their mouths. ☺

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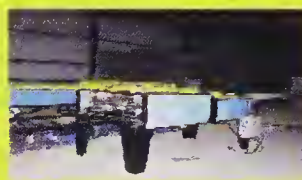
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January Events

NC Symphony



The North Carolina Symphony plays "Rachmaninoff: Piano Concerto No. 2," directed by Grant Llewellyn (above), on January 11 in New Bern. To learn more, call (877) 627-6724 or visit www.ncsymphony.org

ONGOING

Twelve Days of Christmas
Through Jan. 4, Chapel Hill
(919) 933-2001
www.carolinainn.com

Festival of Lights
Through Jan. 4, Blowing Rock
(828) 295-5525
www.chetola.com

Christmas at Korner's Folly
Through Jan. 4, Kernersville
(336) 966-7922
www.kornersfolly.org

"Trains, Trains, Trains" Exhibit
Through Jan. 4, Kings Mountain
(704) 739-1019
www.kingsmountainmuseum.org

"Seeing the City: Sloan's New York"
Through Jan. 4, Winston-Salem
(336) 758-5580
www.reynoldahouse.org

Arts League—Mixed Media Show
Jan. 9–31, Hertford
(252) 426-1432
www.perquimansarts.sorg

"Mountain Roots"
Catch the Spirit of Appalachia—
founding mountain cultures
and landscapes
Through mid-Jan., Bryson City
(828) 293-2239
www.spiritofappalachia.org

"Masters of the Night"
NC Arboretum
Traveling exhibit about bats
Jan. 17 through May 10, Asheville
(828) 665-2492

3
Cherryholmes Family Band
Troy
(704) 985-6987
www.bluegrassintroy.com

Antique Gun & Military Antiques Show
Jan. 3–4, Raleigh
(704) 282-1339
www.thecarolinatrader.com

6
"The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee"
Musical comedy
Fayetteville
(910) 438-4123
www.atthecrown.com

7
Luncheon Lecture with Karen Tumulty
Political Correspondent for "Time" magazine
Charlotte
(704) 568-1774
www.charlottesmuseum.org

9

"Escanaba In Da Moonlight"
Hunting comedy
Jan. 9–25, Hickory
(828) 327-3855
www.hct.org

10

Wedding Expo
Jan. 10–11, Outer Banks
(252) 480-2395
www.outerbanksweddingassoc.org

11

North Carolina Symphony
New Bern
(877) 627-6724
www.ncsymphony.org

13

"Ain't Misbehavin"
Pembroke
(910) 521-6409
www.uncp.edu/gpac

15

"Max & Ruby"
Children's musical
Pembroke
(910) 521-6409
www.uncp.edu/gpac

"The Baker's Wife"
Jan. 15–18, 23–25, 29–Feb. 1
New Bern
(252) 633-0567
www.newberncivictheatre.org

16

Contemporary Folk Concert—Brooks Williams
New Bern
(252) 633-6444
www.downteastfolkarts.org

University Trumpet Festival
Jan. 16–18, Western Carolina University, Cullowhee
(828) 227-3274
www.ulrichmusic.com

17

Blacksmithing Demonstration
Jan. 17–18 & 24–25, High Point
(336) 885-1859
www.highpointmuseum.org

18

The Symphony of Rutherford Winter Concert
Spindale
(828) 245-1492
www.rcsymphony.org

22

Carolina Gospel Association
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Rutherfordton
(828) 245-1492
www.carolinagospel.com

Winterfest
Jan. 22–25, Blowing Rock
(877) 295-7801
www.blowingrockwinterfest.com

24

The Big Chill Casino Night
Shelby
(704) 484-2787
www.ccartsCouncil.org

Open Hearth Cooking Demo
High Point
(336) 885-1859
www.highpointmuseum.org

Guilford Militia Encampment
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27

The Dublin Philharmonic Orchestra
Pembroke
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For April: Feb. 24

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Sitting just southeast of Raleigh, Chatham boasts an appealing mix of old-time towns and bustling suburbs. Pittsboro, Fearington Village, Governor's Club and new communities near Jordan Lake are home to many who work in Chapel Hill, Cary and the Research Triangle. Before the residential development, it was a community of farmers and mill workers, and agribusiness still accounts for almost one third of county income today.

Historic Pittsboro, the county seat, is awash with unique restaurants and shops, including more than 25,000 square feet of antiques. "Can't miss" stops include the Bead Hive, a full service bead store, and Beggars and Choosers, bursting with vintage housewares and clothes. For nightlife (and good food), hometown musicians take the stage Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights at the General Store Cafe.

Celebrity Dairy, a goat farm in Siler City, invites folks to dinner on the third Sunday afternoon of each month. Owners serve up an educational "cheese chat" and seasonal menus. Other farms such as Sunny Slopes, Periwinkle, and Peregrine Farms provide fresh seasonal produce and flowers. A few miles south of Siler City off Old US Route 421 on Mount Vernon Springs Road are two natural springs pouring mineral waters, nicknamed Health and Beauty, with picnic tables nearby. This peaceful area was once a famous health spa. Just down the road is the Mt. Vernon Springs Presbyterian Church for those who like gothic revival-style structures. Or see pottery, garden sculptures and more on the informal Tour de Moncure (near Sanford), organized by artists to show off shops (www.emji.net/tour_de_moncure).

Fearington Village, on the site of an 18th-century dairy farm outside Chapel Hill, has beautiful gardens, charming shops, including an independent bookstore, and an acclaimed country inn and restaurant. Outdoor lovers can hike through White Pine Preserve, located at the nook of the Deep and Rocky rivers, and take 198 miles of bicycle trails on lightly traveled country roads. Order a free map on www.ncdot.org (type in Chatham County bike map).

Three top spots:

Carnivore Preservation Trust

If you've never seen a binturong before, here's your chance. At this exotic sanctuary, you see up close and personal more than 80 creatures, including Romeo the 600-pound tiger, and Pena the snow leopard. Tours on weekends by appointment only. \$12, adults; youth 4-12, \$7; children under 3, free. (919) 542-4684 or www.cptigers.org.

Jordan Lake

With nine recreation areas and an impressive dam, this 13,900-acre reservoir offers boating, camping, fishing, swimming and commercial marina. Bald eagles like it here, too. (919) 362-0586 or www.ncparks.gov.

New Hope Valley Railway Rides

This family attraction has train rides on Sundays, a big model railway and museum exhibits. The trip to New Hill and return to Bonsal takes about an hour. Regular ticket fare is \$9 per adult and \$6 per child age 2 to 12. Special event fare may vary. (919) 362-5416 or www.nhvry.org.



Above top: Relaxing on Jordan Lake. Above bottom: New Hope Valley Railway rides

To salt or not to salt

Sodium chloride is the most common ingredient used for de-icing roads and sidewalks. Homeowners typically apply it in the form of rock salt. Excessive salt in snow that melts off driveways and walks can leach into the soil, harming or killing turf grass, trees and shrubs. On a larger scale, salt used to de-ice highways can pollute lakes and streams and is also corrosive to road surfaces. Alternative products exist, but each has its own set of pros and cons. A new product that holds promise for reducing environmental impacts is made from a byproduct of the corn wet-milling process. Some highway departments are experimenting with corn-based de-icers, which are also less corrosive to concrete and asphalt.

Alternatives to sodium chloride include:

Calcium chloride—A widely touted alternative to rock salt. Effective down to temperatures of -31 degrees C compared to -10 degrees C for sodium chloride. About three times more expensive than rock salt, but covers more area. Less harmful to plants than sodium chloride, but still contains salts. Corrosive to metal and concrete.

Urea—Often touted as an environmentally friendly product, but high in nitrogen, which can damage plants and harm water quality. Significantly more expensive than rock salt. Less corrosive to hard surfaces. Effective to about -4 degrees C.

Calcium magnesium acetate—Contains dolomitic limestone and acetic acid. Very expensive but much kinder to concrete and plants. Effective to about -3 degrees C.

Sand or cat litter—Doesn't melt snow or ice, but can improve traction. Messy cleanup.

For a comprehensive look at these and other de-icing products, go to <http://water.greenventure.ca/road-salts-deicers>. Regardless of the product you choose, the best way to reduce negative impact is to use only the amount needed. You can easily get carried away with hand-sprinkling. Follow package instructions and measure carefully. Also, be sure to wipe your pet's paws after walks. Salts and chemical de-icers they lick from their paws can cause serious harm.

Camellias with foliar flair

Camellias are treasured for their winter blossoms and evergreen foliage. Some lesser-known camellia varieties sport variegated leaves that add even more interest to the ornamental package. Variegation of camellia foliage is caused by a genetic mutation or a virus. The latter is usually benign; in fact, horticulturists sometimes deliberately introduce viruses to produce variegation. Commercially available varieties include:

'Winter's Sunset' (*Camellia* hybrid)—Leaves have light-green margins. Flowers are single and pink. Fall bloomer.

'Greensboro Daybreak' (*C. japonica*)—Leaves have yellow margins and splotches. Red, semi-double flowers. Winter bloomer.

'Benten-kagura' (*C. japonica*)—Leaves have an irregular, white border. Red peony-like flowers are mottled with white. Fall bloomer.



Salix alba 'Flame' is a large deciduous shrub to small tree whose new growth turns red to orange-red in winter. It can be pruned hard to contain its size and to encourage the abundance of new wood.

'Shikishima Splash' (*C. sasanqua*)—Leaves splashed with bright yellow. Medium-pink, double flowers. Fall bloomer.

For more information about variegated camellias, visit www.camforest.com. Or call Camellia Forest Nursery in Chapel Hill at (919) 968-0504.

Hort Shorts

- Marginally hardy or tender plants can be protected from freezing temperatures via commercial products like Wall O' Waters. Homemade versions can work too. Wall O' Waters are a series of connected, topless, plastic tubes that encircle a plant. Filled with water, they absorb heat during the day and release it at night to insulate the plant. They protect plants from weather as cold as 16 degrees F. If the water freezes, it produces heat that keeps the air temperature inside the wall above 32 degrees F. You can achieve a similar effect using a ring of milk jugs or soda bottles filled with water. Any spaces between the containers must be sealed. Duct tape or silicon glue will work. Some gardeners use Wall O' Waters to get a jump on the spring vegetable season.
- The 'Flame' willow is a large, deciduous, multi-stemmed shrub with eye-popping winter appeal. The stems are bright yellow-orange. It may grow as large as 20 feet tall, but can be pruned to size each year. It grows best in full sun in average to wet soil. ☺



Carla Burgess can be reached at ncgardenshare@mindspring.com.

For more gardening advice, go to the "Carolina Gardens" section of www.carolinacountry.com.

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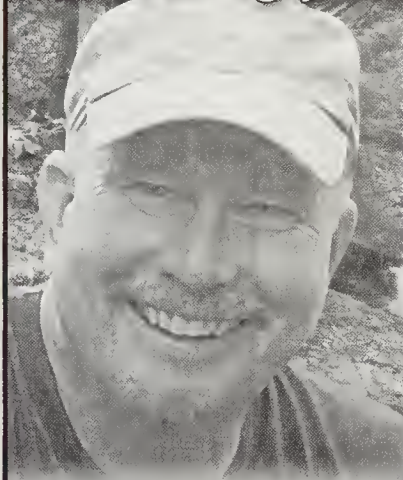
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New refrigerator/freezers are much more energy efficient than older models. Energy Star-qualified models are 20 percent more efficient than the most recent federal energy efficiency standards. This means a new super-efficient model may use less than half as much electricity as an old one. They also send less heat into the kitchen during summer.

The energy savings from a more efficient compressor and insulation should pay back the cost of a new model over its lifetime. My own refrigerator is about 16 years old. We had a recent power outage due to Hurricane Ike, and my food warmed within eight hours and had to be trashed. My neighbor has a new model, and the insulation kept food in his refrigerator safely below 40 degrees for the same time period.

When selecting a new refrigerator, the size is the most important factor affecting its electricity usage. Select as small a model as will meet your requirements. You can base the size requirements on your existing refrigerator size and how full it typically is (not counting holiday occasions).

Don't skimp and buy one that will be too small, with plans to buy another small backup or to keep the old one running in the garage. This will use much more electricity than just buying a larger one initially. Features such as split shelves that crank up and down, as well as pullout shelves, can increase interior space with a smaller exterior size.

French door models with the freezer below are becoming popular. These offer the convenience of greater access to items in the refrigerator portion with the two doors opened. Some have two separate freezer drawers below with one specifically for large items. One drawback is that

you must bend down to access the freezer. Another is they are less efficient than top freezer models.

If you buy fresh meats and fish, select a model with a meat-keeper drawer. This drawer stays above freezing, but is a few degrees colder than the rest of the refrigerator section, which keeps the meat and fish fresher for a longer time.

Some new models use LED lighting for energy efficiency and interior brightness. Whereas a 75-watt incandescent light bulb will burn out after about 40 days of continuous use, an LED can run constantly for four full years. And LEDs use roughly 66



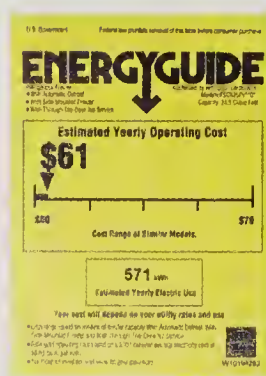
This stainless steel wrapped side-by-side refrigerator has digital temperature readouts on the freezer door.

percent less electricity than an incandescent bulb in producing the same light. There are also secondary savings: LEDs produce less heat inside the refrigerator, so the compressor runs less. Another advantage is they can be spaced better for more even lighting than a single incandescent bulb. With better lighting, it is easier to find foods items and so less cold air escapes.

It is wise to select models with fewer through-the-door features, such as ice/water dispensers. These are expensive and they take up space that would otherwise be used for insulation.

For extreme energy savings, some relatively unconventional refrigerator/freezers run on low DC (direct current) voltage. These can draw power from wall outlets, or directly from sources such as solar panels, wind turbines and backup emergency battery packs. The low-voltage models have a boxy appearance with extremely heavy wall insulation. Ⓢ

James Dulley is an engineer and syndicated columnist for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.



The yellow energy guide label tells you how much electricity this models uses and compares it to other similar-sized models.

The following companies offer refrigerator/freezers:

Frigidaire (800) 374-4432
www.frigidaire.com

General Electric (800) 626-2000
www.geappliances.com

Kitchenaid (800) 334-6889
www.kitchenaid.com

LG (800) 243-0000
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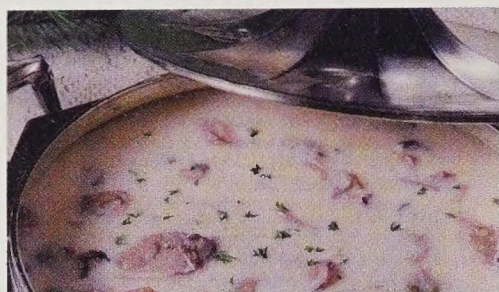
Four Onion Soup

- 1 medium yellow onion
- 1 medium red onion
- 1 medium leek (white portion only)
- 5 green onions with tops
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 2 cans (14½ ounces each) beef broth
- 1 can (10½ ounces) condensed beef consommé, undiluted
- 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- ½ teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 1 cup (4 ounces) shredded Swiss cheese
- 6 slices French bread (¾-inch thick), toasted
- 6 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese, optional

Slice all onions ¼ inch thick. In a large saucepan over medium-low heat, sauté onions and garlic in butter for 15 minutes or until tender and golden, stirring occasionally. Add broth, consommé, Worcestershire sauce and nutmeg; bring to a boil. Reduce heat; cover and simmer for 30 minutes.

Sprinkle 1 tablespoon of Swiss cheese in the bottom of six ovenproof 8-ounce bowls. Ladle hot soup into bowls. Top with a slice of bread. Sprinkle with Swiss and Parmesan cheeses. Broil 6–8 inches from the heat or until cheese melts. Serve immediately.

Yield: 6 servings



New Year's Oyster Stew

- ¼ cup butter, cubed
- 3 leeks, white part only, chopped
- 2 potatoes, peeled and diced
- 2 cups water
- 3 chicken bouillon cubes
- 2 cups milk
- 2 cups Half-and-Half cream
- ¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 4 cans (16 ounces each) oysters, drained
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Fresh chopped parsley

In a large soup kettle or Dutch oven, melt butter and sauté leeks until tender, about 10 minutes. Add potatoes, water and bouillon cubes; cover and simmer 20 minutes or until potatoes are tender. Cool.

Transfer to a blender. Cover and process on high until blended. Return to kettle; add all remaining ingredients. Cook on low until heated through (do not boil).

Yield: 12 servings

Grilled Marinated Pork Tenderloin Sandwiches

- ½ cup soy sauce
- ¼ cup packed brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 teaspoon ground ginger
- ½ teaspoon ground mustard
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 pound pork tenderloin
- 12 dinner rolls, warmed

In a large bowl, combine the soy sauce, brown sugar, oil, ginger, mustard and garlic. Pour ¾ cup of this marinade into a large resealable plastic bag; add the pork. Seal bag and turn to coat; refrigerate for 12 hours or overnight, turning several times. Cover and refrigerate remaining marinade.

Drain and discard marinade from meat. Coat grill rack with nonstick cooking spray before starting the grill. Grill pork, uncovered, over medium heat for 7–8 minutes on each side or until a meat thermometer reads 160 degrees. Baste with remaining marinade during the last 7 minutes of cooking.

Let stand for 10 minutes; carve in thin slices and serve on rolls.

Yield: 12 servings



Smoky Bacon Wraps

- 1 pound sliced bacon
- 1 package (16 ounces) miniature smoked sausage links
- 1 cup packed brown sugar

Cut each bacon strip in half widthwise. Wrap one piece of bacon around each sausage. Place in a foil-lined 15-by-10-by-1-inch baking pan. Sprinkle with brown sugar. Bake, uncovered, at 400 degrees for 30–40 minutes or until bacon is crisp and sausage is heated through.

Yield: about 3½ dozen

Winning reader recipe

Easy Seafood Chowder

- 3 cans (10¾-ounce) of cream of potato soup
- 2 cans (10¾-ounce) of New England clam chowder
- ½ cup of butter
- 1 small onion, diced
- 1 pint of Half-and-Half
- 1 bag (1 pound) of frozen corn
- 2 cans (6½-ounce) of chopped clams
- 1 can (6-ounce) of tiny shrimp
- 1 can (6-ounce) of crabmeat

Combine all ingredients in a slow cooker on low for 2–4 hours. Or, simmer on the stovetop for 2 hours.

Yield: Makes 5 to 6 servings

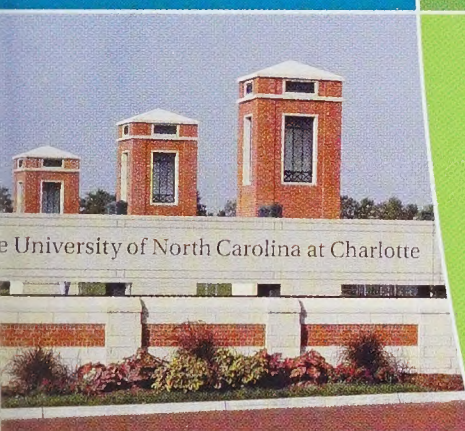
Brantley Averkamp of Huntersville, a member of EnergyUnited will receive \$25 for submitting this recipe.

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55	\$ 3.20	\$ 2.53
65	\$ 5.36	\$ 4.14
75	\$ 10.23	\$ 7.64
85	\$ 19.77	\$ 16.52

* Does not include \$36 policy fee, minimums may apply

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5	N/A	N/A
15	N/A	N/A
35	\$ 1.79	\$ 1.49
55	\$ 4.30	\$ 3.55
65	\$ 7.18	\$ 5.41
75	\$ 13.24	\$ 8.85
85	\$ 26.26	\$ 17.67

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